

TESTIMONY OF MONTANA WOOL GROWERS ASSOCIATION IN SUPPORT OF SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION #6

Jim Brown on behalf of the membership of the MWGA

108 S. Pacific Street

Dillon, MT 59725

- Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee
- My name is Jim Brown, among other duties, I am the lobbyist and attorney for the Montana Wool Growers Association.
- On behalf of the membership of the MWGA, I rise today in support of Senate Joint Resolution #6.
- As every person on this Committee is likely aware, the federal government is the largest single landowner in the United States.
- The federal government controls more than 660 million acres, which represents nearly 1/3rd of the land mass of the United States
- More than 90% of federal land is located in western states, including Montana.
- When these lands were placed into the public domain, it was understood and agreed that they would be managed for the largest public benefit, which means managing those lands for multiple use.
- Multiple use means allowing and encouraging grazing, recreation, forestry conservation, and responsible natural resource development, which such uses are used to benefit local communities. And, for most of the 20th century the federal government managed lands in this way so that they would be beneficially used.
- By using the term 'beneficially used', I mean used to produce revenue and opportunity for local communities, by allowing productive-industries to use the land to produce products – such as timber, agriculture commodities, and minerals.
- However, as we have all experienced, over the last thirty years, due to the limitations being placed on our public lands by both federal and state regulatory creep and by lawsuits filed by so- called environmental organizations, and by burdensome federal resource management plan requirements, such as NEPA reviews, the multiple use concept is being replaced by a shut it down to the public, don't manage it philosophy.
- It's time for this troubling precedent to reverse, and that starts with states, such as Montana, calling on the federal government to recognize the importance of multiple use of public lands and to recognize the need to responsibly manage those lands so as not to preclude their productive use.
- The fact is that everything we use in our lives is or was a natural resource, which at one point was mined, logged, grown, or drilled.
- Necessities like food, clothing, medicines, and shelter all are provided, in part, by use of public lands; as are the things we use and enjoy such as computers, televisions, phones, electrical systems, and sewer systems are all a derivative of the use of our public lands by industries such as the sheep industry.
- Further, multiple use of public lands and the benefits it provides is a jobs issue – providing economic benefit, promoting vibrant economies, and raising tax revenue for local communities around Montana, and throughout the West.
- The facts don't lie. Agriculture and the extractive industries are the major contributor to the economic health of Montana. Agriculture occurs in every county in this State, and we, the sheep industry are a major source of employment and revenue generation. We

are also a major player in the global market, sending products to markets all over the world.

- The ever increasing restrictions on our ability to graze public lands and on our ability to run our water diversion systems across public lands, has hurt the competitiveness of our industry greatly and is putting into jeopardy Montana's top revenue producer.
- The items called for in this Resolution, such as expediting land use decision making, protecting historical uses of public lands, encouraging responsible and sustainable development of our natural resources, and promoting legislative policies that keep these lands truly open and accessible for the public are good for Montana as a state and good for the citizens of this State.
- The items called for in this resolution are common-sense principles, which have, for many years in this State, garnered bipartisan support.
- On behalf of the membership of the Montana Wool Grower's Association, we thank the sponsor Senator Olson for bringing this resolution forward, and we encourage the members of this Committee to unanimously pass this Resolution and send a message to Washington D.C. that public lands in Montana are being managed well, that the 'Treasure State' supports multiple use of public lands, and that the people of the Treasure State support its farmers, ranchers, loggers, miners, and energy producers.